

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Application of AEP Ohio)
Transmission Company for the Second Amendment to) Case No. 20-1279-EL-BTA
the Rouse-Bell Ridge 138 kV Transmission Line Project)**

Members of the Board:

Chairman, Public Utilities Commission	Ohio House of Representatives
Director, Development Services Agency	Ohio Senate
Director, Department of Health	
Director, Department of Agriculture	
Director, Environmental Protection Agency	
Director, Department of Natural Resources	
Public Member	

To the Honorable Power Siting Board:

Please review the attached Staff Report of Investigation, which has been filed in accordance with Ohio Power Siting Board rules. The application in this case is subject to an approval process as required by Section 4906.03 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Respectfully submitted,

Merna White

Theresa White
Executive Director
Ohio Power Siting Board

OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Project Name: Second Amendment to the Rouse-Bell Ridge 138 kV Transmission Line Project (associated prior case nos. 17-1908-EL-BTX, 19-1307-EL-BTA)

Case Number: 20-1279-EL-BTA

Project Location: Monroe and Washington Counties

Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company

Application Filing Date: August 7, 2020

Inspection Date: August 19, 2020

Report Date: November 25, 2020

Applicant's Waiver Requests: None

Staff Assigned: J. Pawley, G. Zeto

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

Application: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Approval with Conditions

Waiver: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Not Applicable

Application Description and Need

AEP Ohio Transmission Company (Applicant or AEP Ohio Transco) is proposing a second amendment to the Rouse-Bell Ridge 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line project, which was approved by the Ohio Power Siting Board on September 20, 2018, in Case No. 17-1908-EL-BTX and subsequently amended in Case No. 19-1307-EL-BTA on September 19, 2019. Proposed adjustments consist of shifting locations of approved structures which are proffered following advanced detailed engineering for the amended approved preferred route.

The type of transmission equipment would not change. The Applicant states that the economic impact would not change as a result of these adjustments. The need for the facility and grid impacts associated with the facility remain the same as was approved in Case Nos. 17-1908-EL-BTX and 19-1307-EL-BTA.¹ The proposed second amendment would not increase the number of structures

1. The cost for this project was described in Case No. 17-1908-EL-BTX and 19-1307-EL-BTA and Applicant indicates that the entire project cost will be included in the Applicant's formula rate (i.e. the annual transmission revenue applicable under PJM Open Access Transmission Tariff, Attached H-20) and would be assessed on all transmission customers with that zone. Case No. 17-1908-EL-BTX also indicated that this project was assigned PJM upgrade supplemental project ID s1160. (PJM Interconnection, "Transmission Construction Status," <https://pjm.com/planning/project-construction.aspx> (Accessed November 3, 2020). A Supplemental Project is defined in the PJM Operating Agreement as a transmission expansion or enhancement that is not required for compliance with the following PJM criteria: system reliability, operational performance or economic criteria, pursuant to a determination by the Office of the Interconnection and is not a state public policy project pursuant to Operating Agreement, Schedule 6, section 1.5.9(a)(ii). See also, PJM Manual 14B: PJM Region Transmission Planning Process, Revision 46, effective August 28, 2019, available at: <https://www.pjm.com/-/media/documents/manuals/m14b.ashx>.)

required for the Rouse-Bell Ridge rebuild project, but rather shift locations of the approved structures.

The Rouse-Bell Ridge project was originally approved as an upgrade of the existing 23 kV electric system in Monroe and Washington Counties. The line is part of the overall Southeast Ohio Area Improvement Project under way by AEP Ohio Transco. That purpose for the transmission line has not changed with this second amendment request, in fact the project is presently under construction in areas not affected by this request.

Construction commenced on the Rouse-Bell Ridge project on October 21, 2019 in areas not covered in this second amendment request. The Applicant's current project schedule has construction ending in early-mid 2021.

Engineering Adjustments

There is one instance of a proposed engineering adjustment to the amended approved preferred route. The proposed engineering adjustment involves a shift of one structure location. The Applicant states that the engineering adjustment would occur within the 100-foot right-of-way of the approved alignment.

Structure 14: The Applicant is proposing a shift of structure location 14 approximately eleven feet to the west of the originally approved structure location. This shift would allow the placement of the structure to a location that would avoid sloped terrain which would otherwise make the installation of the structure to have too small of a work pad based on existing terrain. The structure shift proposed would allow for adequate space on level terrain for construction equipment to be located during installation of the new structure. The engineering adjustment would occur on the same property so, no impacts to additional property owners would occur as a result of this adjustment.

Rerouting outside the approved 100-foot right-of-way

Structures 34-37

There is one instance of rerouting the amended approved preferred route outside of the 100-foot right-of-way. This reroute involves the relocation of structure locations 34-37. The Applicant is proposing to adjust structure 35 to the northwest by 174 feet. This change is proposed by the Applicant due to steep and unfavorable terrain for heavy equipment and personnel to get access to the structure pad. It was determined during final engineering by the Applicant that any access road to be constructed to get vehicles and structures to the site would present safety concerns associated with operating heavy equipment along these severe slopes. Shifting this structure away from the side of the slope and to flatter terrain would allow the safe construction and access of the structure.

By proposing the shift to structure 35, shifts to structure locations 34, 36 and 37 would also be necessary in order to accommodate the new angle at this location of the project. Structure 34 is proposed to shift 224 feet to the northwest, which would then allow the Applicant to remove a structure (structure 33) because of the reduction in distance to structure 32. Likewise, on the eastern side of the proposed shift, structure location 36 would move 96 feet and structure location 37 would shift 24 feet to the north and east.

The Applicant states that no new property owners would be impacted by this proposed change between structures 34-37.

Application Review

Social Impacts

Staff finds that the proposed adjustments are not expected to significantly alter existing land uses, including agricultural land, or to increase the estimated capital costs for the project. The adjustments are primarily proposed as a result of the Applicant's final engineering of the approved amended preferred route. With the proposed adjustments, the number of residential structures identified within 1,000 feet of the centerline would remain at 88, with none of the residences located inside the right-of-way. The nearest residence is located 12 feet from the edge of right-of-way. This remains unchanged from the original approved route and is not located in the area of this proposed second amendment. No residential structures would need to be removed from the right-of-way for this project.

These proposed alignment sections have been studied for the presence of archaeological resources and historic impacts and no significant adverse impacts on cultural resources are expected. The State Historic Preservation Office concurs that the amended alignments would not be expected to impact cultural resources. Staff agrees with this assessment.

Staff finds that the purposes of the proposed adjustments to avoid steeply sloped terrain both for the location of the structures as well as for construction access to the structures to create a safer construction environment is reasonable. As provided in the application, the amended alignments would not significantly alter the percentage of agricultural or residential land being crossed.

Surface Waters

The proposed adjustments would not result in any new stream crossings. Total linear feet of stream within the right-of-way would increase slightly from 9,752 to 9,853 linear feet.

No new wetlands would be crossed by the proposed route. The total acreage of wetlands within the right-of-way would remain approximately the same. All delineated wetlands are category 1 and category 2 wetlands.

Adherence to the conditions of the original certificate as well as implementation of the storm water pollution prevention plan would minimize impacts to surface water resources that could occur as a result of the proposed adjustments.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The proposed adjustments would not result in increased impacts to listed wildlife species. Adherence to the conditions of the original certificate would minimize impacts to listed species.

Recommended Findings

Staff recommends approval of this amendment provided that the following conditions are satisfied. Staff notes that its recommendation for approval of this amendment should not be construed as a recommendation for approval of cost recovery in any ratemaking proceeding.

Conditions:

- (1) The Applicant shall continue to adhere to all conditions of the Opinion, Order, and Certificate for the Rouse-Bell Ridge 138 kilovolt project in Case Nos. 17-1908-EL-BTX and 19-1307-EL-BTA following the route as amended through this second amendment application.

- (2) The certificate authority provided in this case shall not exempt the facility from any other applicable and lawful local, state, or federal rules or regulations nor be used to affect the exercise of discretion of any other local, state, or federal permitting or licensing authority with regard to areas subject to their supervision or control.

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Case No(s). 20-1279-EL-BTA

Summary: Staff Report of Investigation electronically filed by Mr. Matt Butler on behalf of Staff of OPSB